

KESWICK
URBAN SANITARY DISTRICT.

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

Medical Officer of Health

For the Year, 1898.

KESWICK :

T. BAKEWELL, "GUARDIAN" OFFICE,

1899.

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REPORT.

GENTLEMEN,—

The health record of your District for the year ending December 31st, 1898, viewed generally, may be considered an eminently satisfactory one. There has been almost entire freedom from infectious disease, the death-rate is low, and the amount of sickness, as far as one can judge, certainly not in excess of other years.

Vital Statistics The total number of deaths occurring in the District during the year was 64, to which Briery contributed 1, and the Mary Hewetson Hospital 4. But in order to judge correctly of the mortality, it is necessary further to take into account, as far as can be ascertained (*a*) the number of persons not belonging to the District and yet dying therein; and (*b*) that of those properly belonging to this District who have died elsewhere. After careful inquiry, I find that there are 11 of the former to deduct, and of the latter class 3 to add, thus giving a corrected total of 56, and a death-rate (calculating the population up to the middle of the year at 4,870) of only 11.49 per 1,000—an even lower record than that for the previous year. While the total number of deaths is actually less than it has been for at least the last five years, and this, in spite of the natural increase of the population, and the additional area taken in in 1895. The infantile mortality is also

proportionally low, being only 99 per 1,000 registered births.

The ages at death were as follows:—Under one year, 9; one and under five, 3; five and under fifteen, 3; fifteen and under twenty-five, 10; twenty-five and under sixty-five, 21; and sixty-five and upwards, 18.

The causes included 6 (between the ages of 15 and 25), from drowning—the result of two most deplorable boating accidents; 1 from injuries received while playing football; 1 from Diphtheria (contracted outside the District); 1 from Diarrhœa, 1 from Rheumatic Fever, 6 from Phthisis, 10 from other diseases of the Respiratory Organs, 2 from Tubercular Meningitis, 9 from Heart Disease, 4 from Cancer, 5 from Apoplexy, and 18 from “other causes.” The deaths from Cancer, Apoplexy, and Heart Disease are proportionally high, but on the whole, the record may be considered a most satisfactory one.

The Births during the year numbered 2 at Briery, and 99 throughout the remainder of the district, giving a birth-rate of 20·73 per 1,000—the lowest there has been for the last five years.

ZYMOTIC DISEASE.

Scarlet Fever In January, the last 3 cases of the 1897 Scarlet Fever epidemic were notified. Two of these were at once removed to Hospital, the third being well isolated at his own house. After this, no further outbreak occurred until July, when four children living together in an overcrowded house, were attacked, one after another, and immediately removed to Hospital.

The first case was notified on the 9th; then followed an interval of nearly 3 weeks before the others appeared, so that it was impossible that these could have been directly infected by the first, and one is driven to the conclusion that, in spite of every precaution having been taken in the disinfection of the premises and clothes, something, which could not be treated by the ordinary means at our disposal, must have escaped and given rise to the cases which followed—an accident which might possibly have been averted by steam disinfection. Fortunately, the disease spread no further, and has not since recurred.

Diphtheria The results of the bacteriological means of diagnosis in cases of suspected Diphtheria, provided by the Council a little over a year ago, give abundant proof of the value of this method. Seven specimens from suspicious cases were forwarded during the year to the British Institute of Preventive Medicine, for examination. Of these, five negatived the diagnosis of Diphtheria; while in two, the bacillus was found to be present. Out of three cases notified, two were believed to have been imported, and the third occurred in a house, the sanitary condition of which had been condemned some months previously on the occasion of the occurrence in it of a case of Scarlet Fever. The defects have been fully rectified since.

Erysipelas, Of other infectious diseases, there have been but three cases of Erysipelas, not traceable
Measles apparently to any insanitary condition; and one of Measles, imported by a visitor.

Tuberculosis But what has been more particularly exercising the minds of this community, as well as of the country at large, is the amount of havoc wrought by Consumption and other forms of Tuberculosis. The death-rate from Consumption alone in this District was in 1893, 0·73; in 1894, 0·95; in 1895, 1·27; in 1896, 1·04; and in 1897, 0·41; while in 1898, after deducting two out of the six deaths from this cause, on account of the sufferers being non-residents, the death-rate is 0·82 per 1,000 as compared with an average—for the fifteen urban districts of the county—of 1·34 for the year 1897. So that although we seem to have enjoyed a slightly greater freedom from this scourge than has fallen to the lot of most other districts, the mortality is still heavy and does not show much sign of improvement; indeed, on calculating the death-rate from all forms of Tuberculosis, we find that it reaches 1·23 per 1,000, or just over one-ninth of the total number of deaths recorded.

Being fully alive to the fact that Tuberculosis is a preventable disease, the Sanitary Committee requested me to make an inquiry, last May, into the special conditions favouring the spread of the disease in this District, and the Council has since joined the “Association for the Prevention of Consumption and other forms of Tuberculosis,” with a view to keeping in touch with the opinions of the highest authorities of the day upon the subject.

In the course of my report, I made a number of recommendations, chiefly with reference to the need for

improvement in the condition of our cowsheds ; but it was thought at the time that the County Council was about to take up the consideration of the whole subject, and that local bodies would be wise in waiting until such time as they could form part of some larger scheme, applicable to the whole County.

I now understand that the County Council has not moved in the matter ; and, as the conditions become worse as time goes on, owing to new and unsuitable premises being occupied as cowsheds, it is very desirable that the whole subject should again be opened up and thoroughly dealt with by the Sanitary Authority in this town.

Threatened Smallpox During the summer months, while Smallpox was raging at Middlesborough, a careful watch was kept upon the movements of all vagrants coming into the town, but fortunately, though there were some immigrants from infected areas, no case of the disease occurred. Had there been such, the difficulty of isolation would have been extreme, and the necessity for a Smallpox Hospital (all the more urgent now that the new Vaccination Act has come into force), most acutely felt.

Sewerage Other influences threatening to affect the Public Health are : (1) the necessity for completing our system of sewers ; (2) the bad structural condition of many of the poorer cottages ; and (3) nuisances arising from (*a*) overcrowding, (*b*) want of light and air, and (*c*) the insanitary construction and condition of middens and ash-pits.

The pressing need for extending the sewers to some of the outskirts of the town is self-evident. New houses are being built upon land just sufficient to contain them, and a cesspool, certain sooner or later to become a nuisance to the neighbourhood, is the only possible method which can be adopted of sewage disposal.

Ashpits and Middens As regards the Ashpits and Middens referred to in my last Annual Report, it has only been possible so far to deal with them singly. A few of the former have been closed entirely on account of their having become a nuisance, and the condition of some of the latter has been tardily improved, but the complete abolition of all ashpits, which cannot be directly reached by the collecting cart, and the strict enforcement of the bye-laws as to construction and weekly cleansing of middens, would seem to be the only practical means of dealing thoroughly with two of our chief sanitary defects.

Overcrowding Several instances of overcrowding in cottages have come under my notice and have been rectified; but each additional case becomes increasingly difficult to deal with, on account of the paucity of cottages in the town containing anything more than two rooms apiece. It is a simple matter to turn a family out of a house which is too small for them; but before doing so, is it not the duty of the Sanitary Authority to see that there is another into which they can go, and where they may be healthily housed at a reasonable rent? I would therefore suggest the provision of suitable Workmen's Cottages, and also the

erection of Common Lodging-houses on model lines, as subjects for your careful consideration.

Such a scheme might pay, or it might not ; but, in any case, should be looked upon as a sanitary improvement, which would probably play an important part in diminishing the amount of infectious disease, with its attendant cost in disinfection, Hospital accommodation, etc.

Insanitary Dwellings In the same connection has been raised the question of the sanitary or insanitary condition of the dwellings of the poor, generally throughout the town. Want of light, of cubic space, of proper means of through ventilation, and of space at the back of buildings, are the chief evils with which we have to contend, and which in some cases can only be remedied by demolition ; while in others much improvement may be effected by slight alterations and addition of windows and ventilators. It is foretold that the new street connecting Station Road with Bank Street will have a markedly beneficial influence in obliging property owners to demolish and re-construct the old houses which will abut upon it ; but how far this influence will penetrate the neighbouring courts, is a matter of considerable doubt.

1898 Improvements Having endeavoured thus to sketch out a programme of sanitary reform for the new year, it is gratifying to look back upon the amount of good work accomplished during that which is passed. There are three great schemes now fairly floated and only requiring time for their comple-

tion. The widening of Station Road has already commenced; the carrying through of Victoria Street cannot be now long delayed; and the provision of an additional Water Supply, sufficient probably for all time, is well within sight. As to the quality of this water, it need only be said that it closely resembles that from present sources, the analyses of which, made by the County Analyst, are said by him to "indicate waters of great purity," And it is to this supply, abundant in quantity, free from impurity, that we must largely look for a continuance of that high standard of general health which the District at the present time so happily enjoys.

Your obedient servant,

J. R. BURNETT, M.O.H.

WHINLATTER HOSPITAL REPORT.

GENTLEMEN,—

Though during the past year the Hospital has been comparatively little used, it has been instrumental in promptly checking what might have been a serious outbreak of Scarlet Fever, at the height of the summer season. The year 1898 commenced with the remains of the 1897 epidemic of Scarlet Fever still not quite stamped out. On January 1st, there were seven cases in Hospital, but of these, five were discharged during the same month, and two the month following.

Two new cases were admitted on the 9th and 26th of January respectively, and it was not until the 10th March that the last of this series was discharged. After this the District enjoyed a period of four months perfect freedom from this infectious disease, and it was not until July that the Wards had to be again opened for the reception of four fresh cases. The last of these was discharged on September 28th, and since that time until now, no more have been admitted. The total number of admissions during the year is therefore 6, and of discharges, 13. The average stay in Hospital, 46·3 days per patient, and the average number of beds occupied throughout the year, 1·13. It is a pleasure to be able to state that no death has hitherto occurred in the Hospital from the time of its foundation up to the present, although over 50 patients have been treated.

Several very important alterations have been made in the general management of the institution, and first and foremost of these is the decision of the Council that in future the Hospital shall be free of charge to all persons resident within the Urban District of Keswick, and that for the poor who may be unable to provide their own medical attendance at such a distance, an arrangement has been made by which it may still be possible for them to retain the services of their usual medical attendant. By these means, difficulties which might possibly cause delay in isolation are removed, and the way made easy for the prompt removal of any fresh cases which may occur in the town.

The nursing has been carried out as before, by fully-trained nurses from the Cumberland Infirmary. For the first five days of January, two were simultaneously employed; and then, up to March 3rd, only one. When the Hospital was re-opened in July, one nurse was again procured, and remained in attendance up to September 29th. A single nurse has therefore been employed for sixteen weeks in all, and an additional one for five days out of this time.

The general standard of nursing has been of a high order, and may be considered one of the main inducements for parents to send their children to Hospital.

Other changes in the internal management include the discharge of the servant on January 27th, owing to there being no longer sufficient work to keep her occupied, and the resignation of Mr. and Mrs. Dobson, who had discharged their duties as caretakers so

efficiently for over ten months. We have been fortunate in securing the services of capable successors in Mr. and Mrs. Hines.

The Local Government Board has consented to sanction a hospital loan, in connection with which two points should be mentioned. Firstly, that the Council forfeits the right of treating any cases of Smallpox upon the same site, while other patients are in Hospital; and secondly, that the money ought primarily to be devoted to the provision of better heating arrangements, a hot water supply, and sundry other minor requirements.

We have again to thank the donors of books, clothes, and other useful articles presented to the Hospital, during the year.

I am,
Your obedient servant,
J. R. BURNETT,
Medical Superintendent.

